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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001662

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, DS/DSS/ITA, S/CT; NSC FOR E. MILLARD;
LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [EAIR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MV](#) [IN](#) [SE](#)

SUBJECT: Crew foils attempt to hijack Air Seychelles flight; Alleged perpetrator in Maldivian custody

Refs: (A) Colombo-SA/INS 09-09-02 fax
- (B) Ops Center-Colombo 09-09-02 telecons
- (C) FBIS Reston Va DTG 090617Z Sep 02

(U) Classified by W. Lewis Amselem, Charge d'Affaires.
Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

1. (C) Summary: Maldivian authorities have confirmed that there was an attempted hijacking of an Air Seychelles airliner on September 9. The crew subdued a passenger armed with a knife who tried to enter the cockpit. One member of the crew was injured in the incident. The flight landed safely in the Maldives, where the alleged perpetrator has been detained. The Maldivian investigation into the incident continues. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Maldivian authorities have confirmed that there was an attempted hijacking of an Air Seychelles airliner earlier today (September 9). According to preliminary information gathered from sources in the Maldivian government, a passenger aboard an Air Seychelles flight (HM01017 from Mumbai to the Seychelles via the Maldives) attempted to enter the plane's cockpit at around 0500 hrs local time (+4 GMT) this morning, but was subdued by crew members. The man was armed with a knife and indicated that he wanted to divert the aircraft. One member of the crew was slightly injured during the incident. After the plane landed safely in the Maldives, the alleged perpetrator was immediately placed in the custody of the Maldivian National Security Service. (Note: Also see Colombo DAO IIR Septel for additional information.)

3. (U) ((Note: Ref C AFP report asserts that the incident involved two attempted hijackers, which contradicts the information we have received from Maldivian contacts. The report adds that the Air Seychelles flight had 200 passengers on board.)))

4. (SBU) Maldivian authorities have told us that they continue to investigate the incident and will pass whatever information they turn up to us. They report that one AmCit was on board the flight and was unharmed. There is no information indicating a possible political motivation to the attempted hijacking available at this time. The nationality of the alleged perpetrator is not clear. He was apparently carrying an Indian passport, but Maldivian authorities have told us that the passport was apparently a forgery. (Note: The Indian passport, number S790172, identified the alleged perpetrator as Chandra Babu Sasi; DoB 20-08-1970.) Maldivian authorities have said to us that the man looks as if he could be an "Indian or Bangladeshi," but they are not sure.

5. (C) Comment: As far as we are aware, this is the first attempted hijacking involving the Maldives in any way. At this point, there is no indication that the incident involves an Islamic extremist aspect, but it is still too early to say for sure. The Maldivian government has been a solid member of the international coalition against terrorism and we expect that it will brief us thoroughly as it continues to investigate the incident. End Comment.

6. (U) Minimize considered.

AMSELEM